Exhibiting Agendas: Anthropology at the Redpath Museum (1882-99)[1]

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Abstract: McGill University's Redpath Museum is considered here for its significance as a site of Canadian scientific endeavour and a natural history museum of national importance, which devoted a small but prominent gallery to displays of archaeological and ethnological objects. A closer examination of collections and museological practice at the Redpath Museum during the closing decades of the 19th century may serve to illuminate factors influencing the advent of professional anthropology in Canada, typically submerged in the wake of presentist interpretations of the discipline's past.

Résumé: Nous analysons ici le musée Redpath de l'université McGill en fonction de sa place comme lieu d'un effort scientifique canadien et comme musée d'histoire naturelle d'importance mondiale, puisqu'il a consacré une galerie exiguë mais importante à l'exposition d'objets archéologiques et ethnologiques. Un examen attentif des collections et de la pratique muséologique au musée Redpath durant les dernières décades du XIX^{e} siècle peut servir à faire ressortir les facteurs qui ont influencé l'émergence de l'anthropologie professionnelle au Canada, essentiellement soumise à la mode des interprétations «présentistes» du passé de la discipline.

Introduction

John William Dawson (1820-99), geologist and prominent Canadian educator, was responsible for the natural history collections and displays at the Redpath Museum. He also had an interest in prehistory and devoted a small exhibit area (92.9 m^2) to displays of cultural material (Redpath Museum, 1882; 1885). Although Dawson's involvement in the development of Canadian anthropology was tangential at best, his influence on scientific education in Victorian Canada was great, as was his belief in the pedagogical value of museums.[2]

In later years, cultural materials at the Redpath were combined with other McGill collections including artifacts from the Montreal Natural History Society founded in 1827. The university established a separate Ethnological Museum in 1926, but this museum was closed in the 1940s and most of its contents were put into storage. The Redpath resumed its status as a teaching and research museum in 1970 and all of McGill's non-Canadian ethnology collections were incorporated into the Redpath's holdings. At the same time, the McCord Museum became the depository for the university's First Nations collections and those relating to Canada's domestic history. The Redpath's Ethnology collections now comprise close to 17 000 ethnological and archaeological objects with particular concentrations from central Africa, Oceania and ancient Egypt. For a detailed discussion of the history of the collection, see Lawson (1994: 21-40).

The Redpath Museum is considered here for its significance as a site of Canadian scientific endeavour and a natural history museum of national importance, which devoted a small but prominent gallery to displays of archaeological and ethnological objects. A closer examination of collections and museological practice at the Redpath Museum may serve to illuminate factors influencing the advent of professional anthropology in Canada, typically submerged in the wake of presentist interpretations of the discipline's past.

As a natural history museum, the Redpath's historical connection to the development of anthropology is significant. Nationalistic ventures and economic expansion in the 19th century facilitated Western contact with a variety of unfamiliar regions and peoples and brought museums forth as centres for public entertainment and education. The same historical processes were responsible for the emergence of anthropology as a distinct discipline from its natural science roots (see Gruber, 1970 and Stocking, 1987). Museums were the showcases of Victorian science and anthropologists were anxious to share in the prestige accorded the popular museum sciences of zoology, botany, and geology (Van Keuren, 1989: 32). Material culture proved itself particularly appropriate for museum exhibition and for promoting the organized study of anthropology as noted by William Henry Flower, director of natural history at the British Museum: "One of the most potent means of registering facts, and making them available for future study and reference is to be found in actual collections of tangible objects" (1895: 764). Flower cited collections illustrating human anatomy and those showing the arts and customs of "primitive people" as being particularly useful as evidence for anthropological speculation (1895: 764).

In the latter part of the 19th century, anthropology, much influenced by the methodologies of scientific investigation, adopted similar conventions for analyzing ethnographic objects in museums. Procedures of classification included the treatment of exotic people and their objects as natural history specimens representing typological or evolutionary sequences, as exemplified in the writings and collections of General Pitt Rivers (discussed in Chapman, 1985; and Van Keuren, 1984, 1989) and those with a geographical focus, as first introduced by P.F.B. von Siebold in Leiden (see Chapman, 1985: 24 and Frese, 1960: 39-42). These two museological schemes, "comparative" and "geographical" are generally considered the basis for divergent developments in anthropology: the former leading to the armchair theorizing of late-Victorian evolutionism and the latter to the field-intensive and geographically specific social and cultural anthropology of the early 20th century (Chapman, 1985: 16). However, as Chapman emphasizes in his discussion of Pitt Rivers, the relationship of individuals, collections, museums and disciplinary developments has been subject to vast oversimplification:

> Nineteenth century preoccupations with arrangement did not relate so straightforwardly to particular theoretical stances as later theoretical critics or historians of anthropology have tended to assume; nor was the relation of anthropology to museums unproblematic even in the so-called "museum age." (1985: 16)

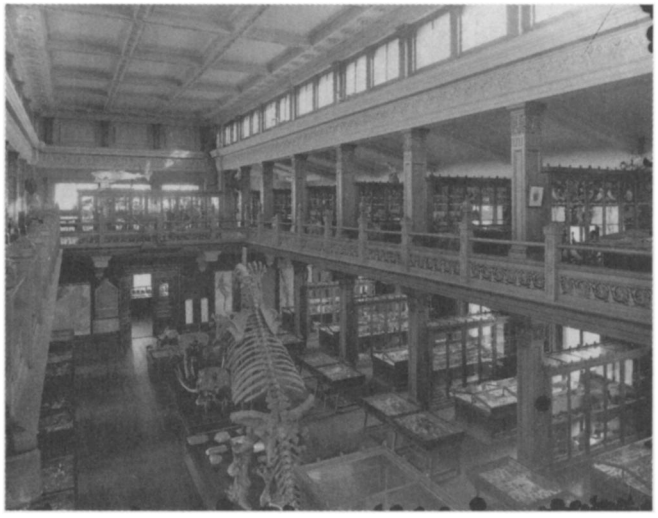
It is further suggested here that the relationship between museums and anthropology in Canada comprises its own particular configuration of events. Although influenced in numerous ways by developments across the Atlantic and to the South, it would be imprudent to graft elements of each national disciplinary history on a single trajectory. The particular situation of cultural artifacts and their display will now be considered within the context of a nascent Canadian anthropology.

Museums and Anthropology in Victorian Canada

During the first half of the 19th century, collections of natural history specimens and cultural artifacts that had been gathered by individuals, communities, as well as religious and educational institutions were formally organized to form some of Canada's earliest museums. Museums in the Maritimes were largely devoted to adult education and influenced by the Mechanic's Institute movement, one notable exception being the museum associated with Thomas McCullough's Pictou Academy (Key, 1973: 99-100). Most of Quebec's museums were affiliated with religious educational institutions; although public natural history displays also made their appearance as in the case of the Musée de Pierre Chasseur in Quebec (Duchesne and Carle, 1990). These early museums had difficulty finding the necessary financial support, as governments at all levels were reluctant to get involved in what they perceived as essentially esoteric pursuits (Key, 1973: 99-129).

This period also saw the proliferation of a number of natural history societies formed through the efforts of professional men with scientific interests (Berger, 1983: 3-18). These societies played a role in popularizing science and among their greatest assets for this task were the museums containing specimens and artifacts that often accompanied them. Although their emphasis tended towards zoological, botanical and mineralogical matters, most such societies did assemble collections of cultural artifacts, which were occasionally recorded and described in the journals they began publishing by mid-19th century. Local archaeological discoveries were often given special notice in these publications and these, along with chance finds and museum collections, formed the basis of the antiquarian-style investigations that were typical of the period (Connolly, 1977; Trigger, 1981).

Redpath Museum, interior from gallery, McGill University



This photograph depicts McGill University's Redpath Museum circa 1893. Paleaontological collections are displayed in the museum hall and zoological specimens are presented on the top floor. Through the open door of the museum hall is the room devoted to archaeological and ethnological artifacts. The silhouettes of skulls and the upper part of a totem pole in the right-hand corner of the top floor gallery along with the 19th-century visitors' guides provide a glimpse of the early anthropology displays. Photo credit: Notman Photographic Archives, McCord Museum of Canadian History, Montreal (view 2604).

The earliest of these and one of the oldest scientific organizations in North America was the Natural History Society of Montreal, founded in 1827 (Frost, 1982: 31). In the 1850s, the arrival of McGill University's new principal, John William Dawson, injected new enthusiasm into Montreal's flagging Natural History Society. Dawson served as president for more than half of his 45-year membership, encouraged donations to the museum and invited the prestigious American Association for the Advancement of Science to hold its 1857 meeting in Montreal, which brought scientific attention to the Natural History Society and McGill.

Another scientific institution located in Montreal that maintained contact with local natural history societies and exerted particular influence on the Natural History Society of Montreal was the Geological Survey of Canada. Established in 1842, the Geological Survey soon included a museum to house the materials from its field surveys. In later years, the Geological Survey's mandate included collecting ethnographic data and artifacts influenced by John William Dawson's son, geologist George Mercer Dawson, who began work with the Survey in 1875 and served as director from 1895 to 1901 (Cole, 1973: 37). The younger Dawson encouraged the Survey to conduct the earliest archaeological as well as ethnographic reconnaissance work in British Columbia. In his survey explorations, G.M. Dawson found numerous opportunities to collect artifacts, which he donated to Canadian museums believing this to be a means of preserving traditional cultures. Dawson's first major collection from the Queen Charlotte Islands went to his father's museum at McGill University. His later collections, mostly British Columbia ethnological and Ontario archaeological specimens, were kept for the Geological Survey museum in Ottawa, forming the basis of Canada's national museums (Cole and Lockner, 1989: 18-22; Collins, 1928: 35-37).[3]

One particularly significant natural history society was the Canadian Institute in Toronto, which served as the major venue for individuals with scientific interests in archaeology and ethnology. Its founding in the mid-19th century and the hiring of Scottish archaeologist Daniel Wilson in 1853 as professor of English literature and history at University College, were integral to the development of a "pre-professional" period of anthropology (Cole, 1973: 33; Trigger, 1981). Wilson's first decades included formal archaeological and ethnographic field work and efforts to collect artifacts for a Canadian Museum, however, no significant collection was established through these activities (Killan, 1983: 85-88; Trigger, 1992: 64-65). Wilson's major anthropological contributions were his cranial studies, which demonstrated that cranial capacity did not provide a uniform gauge of intellectual capacity and refuted claims of cranial homogeneity for all American aborigines (Trigger, 1992: 57, 62-63). David Boyle joined the Canadian Institute in 1884 and was appointed archaeological curator of the institute's museum in May of the same year. Boyle assembled an extensive collection influenced by Wilson's interest in Ontario archaeology, which was exhibited at the Canadian Institute building in Toronto. In 1887, David Boyle receiving a salary from the Government of Ontario, became the first professional archaeologist in Canada. The Canadian Institute's collection was removed to the Toronto Normal School in 1896 and a new archaeological museum was established under the direction of the minister of education (Killan, 1983; Trigger, 1981: 77).

The Natural History Society of New Brunswick (St. John) and the Nova Scotian Institute of Natural Science (Halifax) were both founded in 1862 and were influenced by John William Dawson, who regularly corresponded with members in each organization (Connolly, 1977: 7-9; Sheets-Pyenson, 1992). Both societies were

primarily concerned with the geological sciences and this work unearthed artifacts, which resulted in the development of archaeological interests. Dawson's major work *Acadian Geology* (1878) included a small section in its appendix describing "Micmac Remains," which utilized data supplied by members of Nova Scotia's Institute of Natural Science. Although most work by amateur archaeologists was descriptive, the stratigraphic digs by George Matthew, curator of the Natural History Society of New Brunswick, have been considered the most carefully recorded excavation in 19th-century Canada (Connolly, 1977: 14-15, 20). Matthew and other amateurs engaged in a variety of anthropological investigations turned to Dawson at McGill University and Wilson at the University of Toronto for advice (Connolly, 1977: 7-8, 12-15; Sheets-Pyenson, 1992; Trigger, 1981: 76). As Connolly notes:

> Most, if not all, archeological finds in the provinces [of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick] would have been lost if it were not for the efforts of these groups and individuals who were interested and inspired enough to publish and document data on material remains. In addition to reporting on specific artifacts the societies organized many field trips to track down aboriginal remains to acquire for the societal museums. (1977: 4-5)

Although material culture collections and anthropological inquiries were found in numerous local scientific organizations, the founding of the Royal Society of Canada in 1882, provided a more prestigious forum for these interests and it was during the 1880s that Canadian anthropology began to come into its own (Cole, 1973: 37). Significant events marking anthropology's disciplinary consolidation were the establishment of new sections devoted exclusively to anthropology at the 1882 American Association for the Advancement of Science (A.A.A.S.) and the 1884 British Association for the Advancement of Science (B.A.A.S.) meetings, both held in Montreal on the campus of McGill University and hosted by John William Dawson.[4] The anthropology sections were known early on as being attractive to the general public (Brinton, 1892); in some quarters, the skills required for participation were believed to be suitably based on experience rather than academic specialization (Avrith, 1989: 39-40).

At the B.A.A.S. meetings in Montreal, E.B. Tylor began his address to the nascent section H with the following remarks:

> Our newly-constituted Section of Anthropology, now promoted from the lower rank of a Department of Biology, holds its first meeting under remarkable circumstances. Here in America one of the great problems of race and civilisation comes into closer view than in Europe. In England anthropologists infer from stone arrow-heads and hatchet-blades, laid up in burial-mounds or scattered over the sites of vanished villages, that Stone Age tribes once dwelt in the land; but what they were like in feature and complexion, what languages they spoke, what social laws and religion they lived under, are questions where speculation has but little guidance from fact. It is very different when under our feet in Montreal are found relics of a people who formerly dwelt here, Stone Age people, as their implements show, though not unskilled in barbaric arts, as is seen by the ornamentation of their earthen pots and tobacco-pipes, made familiar by the publications of Principal Dawson. . . . In the present scientific visit of the Old to the New World, I propose to touch on some prominent questions of anthropology with special reference to their American aspects. . . . (Tylor, 1885: 899)

The conceptual importance of artifacts for expressing anthropological concerns is markedly apparent. Tylor's comments regarding Old World prehistory being reflected in the New World's living present harken back to themes present in Daniel Wilson's major anthropological work, *Prehistoric Man* (1862), one of the first major attempts to synthesize the culture-history of the New World (Trigger, 1992). Tylor is particularly anxious to engage his colleagues in a discussion of human antiquity in the New World, assuming his audience to be agreed that man's Quaternary appearance in Europe was a matter of scientific certainty. (This assumption was not totally correct, as J.W. Dawson still stubbornly denied the evidence of Palaeolithic finds in Europe.) Tylor also challenges the belief in a general homogeneity amongst Native peoples in the Americas and incites his colleagues to remedy such generalizations by distinguishing and measuring variation. His address closes with the following appeal:

> What is wanted is a Canadian Anthropological Society with a stronger organisation than yet exists, able to arrange explorations in promising districts, to circulate questions and requirements among the proper people in the proper places, and to lay a new burden on the shoulders of the already hard-worked professional men, and other educated settlers through the newly-opened country, by making them investigators of local anthropology . . . the undertaking of which it is to be hoped will be one outcome of this visit of the British Association to Montreal. (1885: 909-910)

In his discussion of the origins of Canadian Anthropology, Douglas Cole distinguishes the appointment of the Committee on the North-western Tribes of Canada at the Montreal meeting of the B.A.A.S. as the most significant feature of the 1880s and a vital turning point (1973: 40). The Committee brought together the representatives of Canadian anthropology as it existed in the mid-1880s (Daniel Wilson, G.M. Dawson and Horatio Hale)[5] and was charged with the task of recording:

> the characteristics and condition of the native tribes of the Dominion before their racial peculiarities become less distinguishable through intermarriage and dispersion, and before contact with civilised men has further obliterated the remains of their original arts, customs, and beliefs. (Tylor, 1888: 173)

The Committee hired Franz Boas to conduct a series of field expeditions to British Columbia. Artifact collecting was implied by the Committee's mandate and George Dawson arranged funds so that most of the artifacts collected remained in Canada. Dawson eventually assumed leadership of the Committee and chaired its successor, the Ethnological Survey of Canada. His engagement with these organizations was visibly manifest by his development of Ottawa's ethnological collections and his promotion of museum facilities (Cole and Lockner, 1989: 22). Cole also credits the B.A.A.S. committees as being influential in the eventual establishment of a professionally staffed anthropological research centre at the Victoria Museum in Ottawa (Cole, 1973: 42).

It is difficult to assess the exact nature and number of ethnological and archaeological collections displayed in museums as anthropological considerations gained momentum in Victorian Canada. Two surveys give some indication of museum activity at the turn of the century based on information from curators, administrative officers or from published papers and reports (Ami, 1898; Merrill, 1903).[6] These surveys are not without their limitations for assessing anthropological activity: information is based on museum sources rather than external review, providing no relative measure of institutional competence; the surveys may favour eastern institutions or those having more contact with the authors' Ottawa- and Albany-based museum networks; anthropology-related collections receive less notice than their geological and biological counterparts; and few numerical counts of ethnological and archaeological collections are included. Nevertheless, these works do provide a useful overview of these early public depositories of cultural materials.

Ami's study lists 15 public collections with ethnological and/or archaeological material (1898: 62-71). Of these, the Dalhousie University Museum (Halifax) has 330 archaeological objects from Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island; the Natural History Society of New Brunswick Museum (Saint John) has about 600 archaeological objects and 200 ethnological, the Muséum de l'Université Laval (Québec) has an archaeological and ethnological collection of about 1 000 pieces; the Peter Redpath Museum of McGill College (Montreal) has 1 200 ethnological and archaeological artifacts from Canada and abroad; the Geological Survey Museum (Ottawa) has material from northern Canada, Ontario and coastal British Columbia, without any indication of collection magnitude; the Biological Museum, University of Toronto contains a large collection of crania and implements from Daniel Wilson; and the Ontario Archaeological Museum (To- ronto) comprises some 20 000 pieces primarily from Ontario, British Columbia, the United States and Mexico.

Merrill's survey notes 12 museums with ethnological and archaeological collections (1903: 191-200, 212-213). Museums listed with actual counts of artifacts are the Ontario Provincial Ethnological Museum (Toronto) with 2 200,[7] the British Columbia Provincial Museum (Victoria) with 1663 artifacts and the Queen's College University Museum (Kingston) with 500 ethnological objects. The remaining institutions are categorized as having complete, large, local or small collections (1903: 212-213). The Geological Survey of Canada is the only museum noted as having a complete Canadian collection. Six institutions are noted as having large collections: University of New Brunswick (Fredericton), Museum of the Geological Survey of Newfoundland (St. John's), the Provincial Museum (Halifax), the University of Toronto (Ethnological Museum), the Victoria University Museum (Toronto) and the McGill University Peter Redpath Museum. Only one museum is described as having a small collection (Kings College, Windsor, Nova Scotia).

The surveys by Merrill and Ami offer a sketchy picture of anthropological interests as reflected in Canada's early museum collections. Both works place their emphasis on geological and biological materials, but this although partly due to professional biases of their authors, accurately depicts the relatively inferior position of anthropology within the context of Victorian natural history. There are discrepancies in the two surveys resulting from museum reconfigurations, lack of data or mere oversight. However, a combined view of the survey data compensates for some of the inadequacies in each, and produces a total of 17 different collections for consideration. By region, the Maritimes have the greatest number of institutions with seven, closely followed

by Ontario with six, Quebec with three and British Columbia's one listed example. In considering the above, it should be noted that collections of the greatest magnitude appear to be four in Ontario and the British Columbia Provincial Museum, while Quebec's two large collections of some 1 000 artifacts each, may be equal to or greater in number than the three large collections noted for the Maritimes.

Although these surveys provide no indication of the anthropological value of these collections, which cannot be judged by magnitude alone, the following remarks provide some insight into what was perceived as "state of the art" museum anthropology in Victorian Canada. Ami describes the Ontario Provincial Museum's archaeological holdings as being "neatly labelled and catalogued as to exact name of locality, name of donor, collection and date" by curator David Boyle (1898: 70).[8] Merrill notes the Geological Survey of Canada museum as having the most complete collection of Canadian archaeology and ethnology (1903: 195, 212-213). The above-cited institutions have the largest collections in Canada, followed by British Columbia's Provincial Museum, noted as having "one of the best kept and most interesting collections in Canada" with certain ethnology collections being "of special value and interest" (Ami, 1898: 71). Canada's medium-sized institutions seem to average about 1 000 artifacts and appear to concentrate on local materials.

John William Dawson and the Redpath Museum

As the results of the above surveys indicate, the Redpath's ethnological and archaeological collections were aligned with similar museum endeavours elsewhere in Canada. The Redpath Museum developed from the teaching collections of McGill University and was based on the research interests of the university's principal and professor of natural history, John William Dawson. When the foundation stone was laid in September 1880, it was announced that the new building was to serve as a "place of deposit and study of specimens in Geology, Mineralogy, Palaeontology, Zoology, and Archaeology" (Dawson, 1894: 21). It was never intended to house a large general collection, but rather was designed to exhibit "a series of typical specimens for teaching purposes in all departments of Natural Science, and to render these as accessible as possible, both for the use of individual students and for demonstrations by professors and lecturers to large classes" (ibid.: 17).

An early glimpse of Dawson's interest in ethnology can be gleaned from a description of McGill's Natural History collections which included an "Ethnology &c." section as one of its five departments, consisting of "a number of Indian relics from Montreal, presented by the Principal [J.W. Dawson] several valuable casts of antiques presented by Mr. Blackwell, and a number of miscellaneous objects." The notice commented further that the collection would not be developed as the "available space is not more than sufficient for the specimens required in Natural History proper" (Dawson, 1862: 221-223). An ethnology collection is again mentioned more than 15 years later in the 1879-80 McGill Calendar (pp. 45-46) as one of five sections in a museum of Geology and Natural History located in one crowded room of McGill's arts building where specimens were "arranged and labelled as to be accessible and instructive to students." On display were "Indian relics from the site of Hochelaga, the collection of the late Dr.VanCortland [*sic*] of Ottawa, purchased from his heirs; and a small series of American skulls." This same description appears in university calendars for the next two years, the latter including the last reference to ethnology as a distinct museum department. When McGill's collections were transferred to the new Redpath Museum, there is no mention in the calendar of any ethnological displays and later calendars place announcements regarding the Redpath Museum in their "Applied Sciences" section. In spite of this apparent lack of academic regard, McGill's archaeological and ethnological displays continued as a distinct part of the Redpath Museum and increased in number over the next few decades.

The Redpath's formal opening in August 1882, coincided with the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science held at McGill. The newly opened Redpath Museum, which embodied Dawson's science and ambition, had the distinction of being the nation's first specifically designed museum of natural science and the second most important museum in Canada in its heyday, after the National Museum in Ottawa (Ami, 1898; Sheets-Pyenson, 1988: 17, 22). Dawson used both the success of the Museum and the hosting of international scientific meetings to stimulate local scientific interests and to justify future undertakings (Dawson, 1901: 204; Sheets-Pyenson, 1982: 500). For example, the preparations for the A.A.A.S. and B.A.A.S. meetings in the early 1880s rallied Montrealers to donate specimens and artifacts to the Redpath, which in turn ensured collections befitting the dignity of the newly constructed building and provided international visitors with culturally enriched surroundings resembling those to which they were accustomed (Dawson, 1894: 28; 1901: 175-176; Sheets-Pyenson, 1982: 500).

Archaeological and Ethnological Displays at the Redpath Museum

Cultural materials, subordinate in number and emphasis to the other collections, were presented in a vestibule on the main floor and included archaeological and ethnological material from Canada and afar. The adjacent museum hall displayed fossils according to geological age with additional classifications reflecting zoological or botanical taxonomies, and an imposing cast of the British Museum's skeleton of the giant sloth *Megatherium*. Collections of minerals and rocks were systematically presented at the far end of the main hall. The uppermost floor was used to exhibit vertebrate and invertebrate zoological specimens which were organized to feature local and representative examples (Redpath Museum, 1882).

Archaeological and ethnological artifacts were displayed in a room of approximately 92.9 m^2 on the second floor adjacent to the museum's main hall. Comparison of two early exhibit guides, one prepared in 1882 following the A.A.A.S. meetings and an expanded version appearing in 1885, indicate significant growth in the collections, probably due to the 1884 B.A.A.S. meetings and their aftermath. The former notes:

> [C]ollections of specimens illustrating American Archaeology, including Dr. G.M. Dawson's collections from the Queen Charlotte Islands and Dr. [J.W.] Dawson's collections from the site of Hochelaga. In these are many interesting examples of aboriginal wood-carving, pottery and stone implements and weapons. There is also a collection of American skulls, with those of other peoples for comparison. (Redpath Museum, 1882: 1)

The objects from British Columbia described above were the first major collection from George Mercer Dawson's work with the Geological Survey of Canada (Cole and Lockner, 1989: 18-22). The Queen Charlotte material was lent by George Dawson and his brother Rankine for the A.A.A.S. meetings, and remained as a loan collection until they were finally donated to the Redpath a decade later. A further elaboration of the display describes a "series of vessels in wood, stone and horn, fishing tackle, implements, mask, carvings, &c." (Redpath Museum, 1883: 20). In addition to a small number of miscellaneous palaeontological specimens, the room contained "casts of Greek and Assyrian Antiques, and a cast of the famous Rosetta stone which gave the key to the interpretation of Egyptian hieroglyphics." A few anthropology-related specimens situated elsewhere in the museum are worthy of notice. One of the main hall's palaeontological displays was devoted to the Pleistocene and Modern periods and included casts and specimens of various extinct Pleistocene mammals:

> In one of the upright cases is a cast of a skull found with remains of the Mammoth in the Cave of Engis in Belgium, and a human skull from Illinois said to be found in a bed containing bones of the Mastodon. In this case are also specimens of stones and rock surfaces, striated and polished by the ice action of the glacial period (1882: 4).

The second display was situated amidst the upper floor's zoological collections. In two small wall cases in the mammals section were "skulls and a skeleton illustrating the higher apes, and several aboriginal American skulls" (1882: 7).

The expanded guide includes the following additions to the anthropology room:

> Stone Implements and other objects from prehistoric sites in Canada and elsewhere.
> Collection of Skulls representing the principal races of men.
> Objects collected by Rev. Hugh Robertson in the New Hebrides Islands.
> Collections from Pre-historic caves in the Lebanon and stone implements from Egypt (J.W.D.) [J.W.Dawson's donation]. The oldest of these collections belong to Palaeocosmic men, contemporary with the woolly Rhinoceros and other extinct animals whose bones and teeth are found among the debris of the repasts of this primitive people.
> Collections to illustrate the various rocks and useful ornamental stones employed by the ancient Egyptians, and their modes of working these materials (J.W.D.)
> Miscellaneous archaeological specimens from England, the Canary Islands and elsewhere. (Redpath Museum, 1885: 3-4)

In the same room, added to the cast of the Rosetta Stone and other antiquities was a large model illustrating the topography of Jerusalem (1885: 4). The two anthropology-related exhibits situated in the main hall and upper floor mentioned in the 1882 guide remained the same, with the addition to the former display of "an interesting series from the celebrated prehistoric caves of Cresswell [*sic*] in England, presented by Prof. Boyd Dawkins" (1885: 7).

Comparing material listed in the two guides with that described for the collection in the arts building some three years previous, one notices a marked increase in exhibits related to the enthusiasm for the new museum

and its capacious building and the desire to put on an impressive show for its opening, as well as the A.A.A.S. and B.A.A.S. meetings. New donations included over 100 New Hebridean artifacts from resident missionary Reverend Hugh Robertson, about the same number from Egypt and the Lebanon gathered during Dawson's 1883-84 travels in the Near East, flint implements from England brought by B.A.A.S. visitors Dr. John Evans and Professor Boyd Dawkins. All of the major donations listed above, with the exception of Robertson's collection from the New Hebrides, were treated in Dawson's published works which will be considered in assessing Dawson's exhibits.

A report made close to a decade later shows further increase and variety in the Redpath's anthropology displays. Of note were a 9.8 metre-high totem pole from the Queen Charlotte Islands,[9] a rare Guanche mummy and artifacts from the Canary islands (supplementing the small collection described above), Chiriqui pottery and stone artifacts from Panama (Dawson, 1894: 18). Entries in the museum's register for the same decade include additional donations of interest: artifacts from recent excavations of the Egyptian Exploration Fund at modern San el Hagar (mostly from Naukratis) and a granite monumental doorway fragment of Ramesses II found at Bubastis; miscellaneous Micmac antiquities; a human mummy, several mummified animals and other objects from Ancient Egypt; pottery from the Mound Builders found in Missouri and from the Zuni and Pueblos of the American Southwest; Palaeolithic tools and animal bones from Mentone (Grimaldi, Italy); and casts of prehistoric skulls from Cro-magnon and Laugerie Basse (Redpath Museum [1881-1917]).

The two museum guides, early museum reports and the Redpath's donations register provide a good indication of the extent of the collections and what was displayed in the museum from its 1882 opening and throughout Dawson's period of influence. Ami's survey judges the Redpath's archaeological and ethnological holdings to number about 1 200 artifacts (1898: 66); estimates based on the above museum sources and modern inventories indicate a collection somewhere between Ami's figure and 2 000 pieces, although exact numbers are impossible to tabulate given the imprecise nature of the historical records.

The Redpath's ethnological and archaeological collections were neither systematic nor the work of anthropologists, but were assembled by John William Dawson or his personal acquaintances having professional or other interests in different regions of the world. By Canadian standards, the Redpath Museum's collections appear to fall short of those belonging to the Geological Survey of Canada, the Ontario Archaeological Museum and the British Columbia Provincial Museum both in magnitude and systematic acquisition. Unlike other Canadian institutions, there was little emphasis on local material, with the exception of Dawson's collections from "Hochelaga." Historical descriptions of the Redpath, however, indicate a collection that was orderly, that represented both sites and issues then topical in contemporary anthropology and one that included a significant number of important objects. Certainly anthropology had a presence in the Redpath Museum, and deservedly or not, the Redpath had a prominence among amateur anthropologists in Canada and abroad because of the prestigious A.A.A.S. and B.A.A.S. meetings hosted by Dawson in the early 1880s.

J.W. Dawson and His Exhibiting Agenda

Dawson's interest in human history can be traced to his strong attachment to Christianity and his involvement with the excavation of an Iroquoian village site located opposite the McGill campus and thought to be the "Hochelaga" visited and described by Jacques Cartier in 1535 (Dawson, 1859; 1860; 1861).[10] His profound interest in the Bible caused him to focus his anthropological researches upon the origin and history of the human race.[11] He frequently used artifacts and specimens in the Redpath Museum's collections to illustrate his arguments.

Dawson's vision of the pedagogical potential of museums extended well beyond acquainting students and the public with a multitude of natural history specimens and artifacts. He was a firm believer that museums were an effective means of cultivating interest in natural resource development and, more importantly, in the "higher interests of humanity" (Dawson, 1894: 22-23). This latter mission was expressed in an address he made in 1880, during the founding ceremonies for the Redpath Museum:

> Nature proclaims the power and divinity of its Author; and however its testimony may be obscured by any temporary influence of false philosophy, no human power can ultimately silence this testimony, which is, perhaps, more profoundly impressed upon the mind by well-arranged collections of natural objects than in any other way. (Dawson, 1894: 23)

The artifacts and specimens exhibited in the early anthropological displays of the Redpath Museum reflected topics dealt with in several of Dawson's published works (Redpath Museum, 1885: 3-4). *Fossil Men* (1880) focussed

upon Dawson's belief in the unity and unchanging nature of the human species, and was supported by a refutation of human biological and cultural evolution. A presentation of material manufactures from the Dawson site and descriptions of the "Hochelaga" visited by Cartier were central to his discussion, and were used with other North American examples as evidence of a general cultural homogeneity in the New World, which in turn was extended to the European context (1880: 4). The following objects displayed at the Redpath Museum indicate this same argument: antiquities from the site of "Hochelaga," stone implements and other objects from prehistoric sites in Canada and elsewhere and miscellaneous archaeological specimens from England, the Canary Islands and other places.

Objects from the Canary Islands and the Guanche skull displayed at the Redpath Museum were specifically presented in Dawson's written work as tangible evidence in favour of the unity and continuity linking the oldest peoples of western Europe and Africa with the indigenous populations of America (Dawson, 1895: 11-19).

> The [Guanche] skull . . . is one of the most important archaeological donations recently received, representing as it does a race now extinct, and forming in the judgment of many archaeologists a connecting link between the oldest populators of the western part of Europe and Africa, and the aborigines of America. The skull, which is in excellent preservation, so far bears out this view that it presents several striking points of resemblance to eastern American skulls which are placed near it in our collection. Its frontal development is, however, greater, and that of the occipital region less, and in this as well as in some other features it has points of resemblance to the skulls of the ancient Cromagnon race in France. Some beads from an ancient tomb in the Canaries . . . also bear a close resemblance to the wampum of the American Indians. (Redpath Museum, 1883: 17)

Important to Dawson's argument against cultural evolution was his degradationist or degenerationist position, given particular emphasis in his chapter "Lost Arts of Primitive Races" (1880: 146-176). This discussion cited G.M. Dawson's collection of carvings and other objects from the Queen Charlotte Islands, as well as various manufactures from "Hochelaga" as examples of "lost arts"; these objects were displayed in the museum. Also exhibited were "collections to illustrate the various rocks and useful ornamental stones employed by the ancient Egyptians, and their modes of working these materials"; these objects were published in a later work as examples of "the enterprise of an early and active-minded state of society, as distinguished from the fixity and conservatism which appear in later times" (Dawson, 1893: 17).

One of Dawson's most effective methods for refuting evolutionary arguments was to illustrate the limited and ambiguous nature of the evidence used to establish a long-time presence for man on earth. This evidence was based on discoveries of stone tools in association with the bones of mammoths and other long-extinct species. Dawson used his scientific background to show that such associations could result from geological action, rather than contemporaneity, and furthermore, that some of the alleged artifacts were flints modified by natural processes rather human design. Artifacts from prehistoric caves in the Lebanon and stone tools from Egypt were displayed in the Redpath and were also among the examples used in Dawson's written refutations regarding human antiquity (1880: 1-12; 1885).

The small exhibit in the palaeontology hall presented a perfect vignette of Dawson's well-practised argument against evolutionary evidence. The display featured a cast of a human skull found with mammoth remains in the Cave of Engis in Belgium; a human skull from Illinois said to be found in a bed containing mastodon bones; specimens of stones and rock surfaces, striated and polished by ice action of the glacial period; and a series of artifacts from the prehistoric Creswell caves in Derbyshire, England. Dawson's juxtaposition of the Engis and Creswell cave evidence, accepted by European archaeologists as proof of the antiquity of man, with material found in gravel beds mixed by flooding and flints worked by geological action giving the appearance of man-made tools, is meant to cast doubt on the evidence supporting a long-time human antiquity (Dawson, 1880: 342-348; Redpath Museum, 1885: 7).

In spite of the Redpath Museum's physical proximity to the establishment of anthropology as a distinct section in two major international meetings and J.W. Dawson's scientific stature in Canada as a major figure in the Geological Survey, the Royal Society and as president of both the A.A.A.S. and B.A.A.S. during the 1880s, the Redpath's ethnological and archaeological collections remained in a veritable vacuum. Some of this material had been displayed at McGill since the early 1860s, when Dawson established a small ethnology department in the University's museum (Dawson, 1862: 221-223). During the 40 years that he was responsible for this material, however, he did nothing to promote the teaching of anthropology at McGill (Trigger, 1997: 90).

Museums in the Victorian era played an invaluable role in the development of anthropology. Dawson's rejec-

tion of anthropology's theoretical advances was due to his creationist stance and his inability to accept those aspects of biological and cultural evolution that challenged scriptural doctrine. Although his Canadian contemporaries, Wilson and Hale, each had their differences with aspects of evolutionary anthropology, neither let religious sentiment impinge on their scientific judgment.

During the closing decades of the 19th century, some Canadian museums were able to make great strides under the influence of curators like David Boyle, who encouraged archaeological research, developed collections and issued archaeological reports for the Ontario Provincial Museum. Dawson's own son, George Mercer Dawson, developed ethnological and archaeological collections for the Geological Survey of Canada's museum and made a significant contribution to the B.A.A.S. committee's ethnological investigations in British Columbia. The latter committee engaged Franz Boas for field expeditions on the west coast, which established his reputation and allowed him to play a dominant role in the shaping of Canadian anthropology (Cole, 1973; Trigger, 1981).

Dawson's interest in material culture was totally out of line with contemporary developments influencing anthropology and museum presentations elsewhere (see for example, Frese, 1960: 36-72; Hinsley, 1981; Stocking, 1985; and Van Keuren, 1989). There is little question that Dawson's religious beliefs, as articulated in his written work, deflected the attention of anthropologists from the ethnological and archaeological collections of the Redpath Museum. But what effect did Dawson's religious fervour have on amateurs with interests in material culture or the general museum-going public?

Museums and Anthropology in Victorian Canada: Artifacts or Arrangements?

For a variety of historical, economic, and geographical reasons, museum development in Canada varied significantly from that in Britain and the United States (Key, 1973). There were several early important collections associated with religious organizations, natural history societies and educational institutions, but these, having neither the bounty of empire nor the support of private benefactors that nourished museums elsewhere, resulted in Canadian collections that were relatively few in number and small in magnitude. Ethnological and archaeological collections were found chiefly in association with natural history societies and geological surveys, the latter having priority status in the national agenda (Berger, 1983: 3-16; Zeller, 1987: 13-112). Their most influential supporters were individuals of international renown such as Daniel Wilson, J.W. Dawson and G.M. Dawson; the same individuals, along with Horatio Hale, gave impetus to the development of Canadian anthropology in the 1880s, although the elder Dawson's influence was on the wane for reasons cited above (Cole, 1973; Trigger, 1985: 39-44).

The 1884 meetings of the B.A.A.S. in Montreal were significant for the history of anthropology and also specifically for the development of Canadian anthropology. These meetings established a new section "H" devoted exclusively to anthropology, and also created the Committee on the North-western Tribes of Canada, which consolidated amateur interests and formally initiated ethnological survey work in British Columbia. The 1884 B.A.A.S. meetings marked a turning point in the development of Canadian museum collections and data gathering, but one chiefly affecting the Geological Survey Museum and later the National Museum of Canada, and perhaps less directly, provincial museums in Ontario and British Columbia. As Tylor suggested in his address to section "H," the time had arrived for trained specialists to gather material in the field that would distinguish seemingly homogeneous indigenous populations (1885). Collections made as a result of this directive, provided material culture inventories of the cultures surveyed for a few select museums.

The Redpath's anthropology-related displays were not acquired or displayed in a manner that accorded with the methodically collected and documented materials now establishing new museological standards as anthropology gained its foothold in Canada in the 1880s, although the collections made by G.M. Dawson in British Columbia approached the requirements of the new methodology. The museum's displays were themselves an artifact of amateur anthropology as it existed in Canada prior to the intensive ethnological survey work instigated by the B.A.A.S. If the Redpath exhibits are considered apart from Dawson's published works, one encounters collections that were orderly, but far from comprehensive, representing an assortment of sites and issues then topical in anthropological circles (especially British ones), and presenting a variety of impressive technological achievements produced by different peoples of the world (e.g., stone tools, totem poles, mummies, fishing and hunting implements, hieroglyphic inscriptions, etc.). Included among the Redpath exhibits were several objects of singular significance that were rarely seen, if accessible at all, elsewhere in Canada.

The professional and informative nature of 100 or so labels that survive from the late 19th century, although

typically brief, indicate without exception that Dawson's interpretive biases were not present in the written descriptions that accompanied the exhibits. In fact, his personal views intruded on his exhibits only to the extent that certain objects were juxtaposed in ways that took on significance if one was well-acquainted with his publications, which were produced independently of the museum. Although we do not know for certain how the museum-going public perceived Dawson's arrangements, examples past and present illustrate the polysemous nature of objects in the museum context, and the public inclination to interpret objects in their own way, often quite contrary to curatorial design.[12]

Notes

1 I would like to thank Bruce Trigger (McGill University), Moira McCaffrey (McCord Museum) and an anonymous reviewer for their comments.

2 Dawson's anthropological efforts are discussed in Trigger (1966, 1981); for a scientific biography of Dawson, see Sheets-Pyenson (1996); for a discussion of Dawson within the context of Victorian science, see Berger (1983); for Dawson's views on the pedagogical value of museums, see Dawson (1894: 222-223; 1901: 169-177).

3 In 1910, the Anthropology Division of the Geological Survey of Canada was established at the Victoria Museum in Ottawa, becoming the first professionally staffed federal research centre and marking the beginning of Canadian anthropology's professional period (Cole, 1973: 33).

4 The A.A.A.S.'s new section "H" included Daniel Wilson (University of Toronto) as vice president and governing officer, Otis Mason (Smithsonian Institution) as secretary, F.W. Putnam (Harvard Peabody Museum), William Boyd Dawkins (Professor of Geology and Palaeontology, Manchester), James Dorsey (linguist and ethnologist at the Bureau of American Ethnology) and Horatio Hale (linguist, Wilkes Expedition, later chairman of the A.A.A.S.). The B.A.A.S.'s section "H" was presided over by British ethnologist E.B. Tylor. Members in common with its American counterpart included Wilson, Hale and Putnam. Others present were J.W. Powell and F.H. Cushing, both from the B.A.E.

5 For further discussion of Wilson's contribution to Canadian Anthropology, see Trigger (1981; 1992) and Cole (1973). Hale's contribution is presented in Cole (1973: 37-41) and Trigger (1985: 42-44); George Dawson's involvement with anthropology is dealt with in Cole (1973: 37-42) and Cole and Lockner (1989: 18-22).

6 Valentine Ball, director of the Science and Arts Museum in Dublin published his *Report on the Museums of America and Canada* in 1884, but his survey is less comprehensive than those by Ami and Merrill and provides no information regarding ethnological and archaeological collections not present in the later works.

7 Merrill includes the Ontario Ethnological Museum's 2 200 artifacts, but ignores the Ontario Archaeological Museum, which according to Ami had 20 000 pieces in 1898 (p. 70).

8 Boyle's expertise was gained by his appointment in 1884 as archaeological curator of the Canadian Institute collection (much of it his own donation) and subsequent position at the Provincial Museum. By 1887, this later position was supported by the Ontario Government, making him the first professional archaeologist in Canada (Killam, 1983: 100). Ami's observations regarding the excellent organization of the archaeological collections was due not only to Boyle's talents, but also to the benefits of 10 years of full-time professional attention, a situation not equalled in the anthropological collections of other institutions until a much later date.

9 This artifact is now part of the McCord Museum's collection as are all First Nations collections originally donated to the Redpath Museum.

10 This important Iroquoian site has been subsequently renamed "the Dawson site" and is discussed in *Cartier's Hochelaga and the Dawson Site* by J.F. Pendergast and B.G. Trigger (1972).

11 Dawson's published works on this topic include: *Archaia, or Studies in the Narrative of Creation in the Hebrew Scriptures* (1860), later rewritten and republished as *The Origin of the World According to Revelation and Science* (1877); *Fossil Men and Their Modern Representatives*, appearing first in serial form in 1874 and then revised and expanded in book form (1880); and *Modern Science in Bible Lands* (1888). *Fossil Men* represents the summation of Dawson's anthropological investigations and is central to Trigger's analysis of Dawson as anthropologist (1966) Dawson's efforts to scientifically challenge anthropological evidence of human antiquity is discussed in Van Riper (1993: 165-166).

12 This statement is based on personal observation over the past 15 years, having an office in earshot of public galleries in the Redpath Museum. For historical examples of differences in curatorial intentions and public interpretations, see Hudson, 1975; for discussion relating to the public and ethnographic exhibits, see Frese (1960: 89-96); for some recent examples, see Cannizzo (1990), Ames (1992: 153-163) and Lane (1996).

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